

Dr. S. M. Neel,

by

Col. Bennett H. Young.

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Dr. S.M. Neel, the self-
appointed Moses of the

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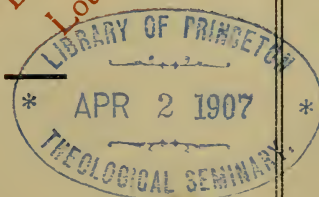
DR. S. M. NEEL, THE SELF-APPOINTED MOSES

of the

SOUTHERN CHURCH.

BEING A RESPONSE TO
DR. NEEL'S ARTICLE
—ENTITLED—

"Col. Young's So-Called Reply"



—BY—

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DR. S. M. NEEL, THE WOULD-BE MOSES

OF THE SOUTHERN CHURCH.

For many months past Dr. S. M. Neel, of Kansas City, has been doing some very wild and loose writing about the Southern Presbyterian Church and its duties. He announced in one of his articles that he was "just out on the firing line," and thereby invited some one to take a shot at him as an organic union scout. Nobody was disposed to treat the Doctor very seriously. Naturally impulsive, he was sure to make some very illogical and blundering statements. In his zeal to be foremost with the vanguard in the Southern Church, who were doing all in their power to stampede that body into Organic Union, the Doctor has persuaded himself that he was a great leader and destined to be a daysman between the Northern and Southern Church.

In all his writings never, until I undertook in a quiet way to point out, not only his fallacious, but his reckless assertions about the Southern Church, has this self-constituted leader said a kind word about his own church. Praise, commendation and flattery were handed out to the Northern Church in great chunks, but no word of tenderness, approval or love for the Southern Presbyterian Church, to which he had pledged allegiance in his young manhood and served in his maturer years.

As a friend of Dr. Neel, I was disposed to overlook these fiery ebullitions, but on the 11th of July, his article in the *Christian Observer*, entitled "Let Us Heal Old Wounds," in which he

assailed his Southern brethren, attempting to dictate what they should publish, how they should spend their money, intimating that they were moved by a devilish spirit, and were against Christ if they did anything but cry out Unity, Unity, Unity, called in my mind, for a response, to let Dr. Neel understand that he could not and must not thus impugn the motives of men who under a sense of duty had resolved to defend and maintain the Southern Presbyterian Church against those who, inside or outside, were attempting to take its life.

No sooner had I taken one round with this ecclesiastical picket, who boasted he was out "on the firing line," than he proceeds to call me all sorts of hard names, and to scatter throughout the church the suggestion that I was intemperate, discourteous, rash and even untruthful.

Amongst a certain class of would-be leaders who seem to be more concerned about the standing of the Northern Presbyterian Church than their own, it is considered treason to speak generous words for the history, faith, orthodoxy and growth of the Southern Church, and if one should dare say he had made or will make a brave defense for the life and purity of the Presbyterian cause, such a one at once becomes, in the eyes of these apologists for the Northern Church, a pharisee of the most baneful type. God forbid that the hour shall ever come when in the mind of a majority of Southern Presbyterian people those shall be condemned or re-proved who stand for its integrity, and who believe and declare that it has a high and noble mission of God, or that it has been a faithful witness for the Master.

In Dr. Neel's original article, one of the most unusual declarations was, in order to justify unity, that "*the Church is not commissioned to defend the Gospel.*" He seems very much distressed because I went to the Dictionary to get the meaning of the word "Commission." The truth is that such a statement coming from such a source is not only surprising, but distressing. One of the most important of all the works of the Church is to defend the Gospel. In answer to this Dr. Neel refers me to Matthew, Chapter 28:18-20. This quotation of the Scripture is extremely unfortunate, as it has no connection whatever with the subject. The 20th verse says: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The Master did direct us to teach. Dr. Neel says that to defend these truths is not the duty of the Church; that all the Church has to do is to let its light shine. Christ did not say that. He drove out the false teachers; he corrected their unfaithful teachings; he definitely declared what was truth, and with scorn and relentless decree reproved those who undertook to teach anything else.

Then Dr. Neel refers to the old chestnut about the Irishman, who, in response to the minister who was trying to teach him Christ, said: "I don't care what Paul said; tell me what Tom Bracken said." Well, Dr. Bracken was a very good man and we all loved him, but he never talked, wrote or thought like Dr. Neel. Dr. Neel now says substantially that we are not to mind what the Scripture says, but in order to get our heavenly light and guidance, must find out what some good man thinks of it. We Presbyterians boast that the Word of God is our guide; by it

we must measure our lives; and from it we must evolve truths, which shall not only govern us, but control the Church. It is evident that the Doctor had been holding this old story in reserve for many years to tell it somewhere. It had palled upon him and he could not resist the temptation to fire it at me. It is quite good, but doesn't fit this occasion.

He suggests that my method of defending the Gospel is to be suspicious of some one. My method of protecting the Gospel is to stand for its integrity, and to hold fast whatever Christ says, and not what some preacher says, or what Dr. Neel says; and when Dr. Neel says there is no commission "to defend the Gospel," I answer him that my Master has told me in the very Scripture he unfortunately quotes, to teach men "to observe all things whatsoever I (Christ) have commanded you."

DR. NEEL'S INNOCENCE.

The assumed innocence of Dr. Neel in regard to the Northern Presbyterian Church is very touching. The newspapers of the Northern Church and many of its leaders have declared that their purpose and plan was to secure union with the Southern Presbyterian Church. This is no secret among well-informed people, and a denial of such a fact is simply discrediting Dr. Neel's intelligence and candor.

DR. NEEL ABUSIVE.

But Dr. Neel grows most abusive and vituperative when he quotes the sentence in my article in which I said "The Cumberland Presbyterian leaders who have gone over to the Northern Church provided with funds out of the treasury

of the Northern Church" are conducting this Tennessee litigation.

For my condemnation and reproof he relies upon three witnesses:

First, Dr. Black, a Cumberland minister, who assures Dr. Neel "that there is no truth in this statement."

Second, upon Dr. Ira Landrith, a plaintiff in the Tennessee suit and one of those who uses the name of the Northern Presbyterian Church in this proceeding, who says "it was not the intention of the unionists to take one dollar that did not *morally* belong to them." Dr. Neel italicizes the word "morally," for this is Dr. Landrith's saving clause.

Third, an editorial in the *Chicago Interior* of September 27th, which said "we want to shoot one falsehood that has just taken wing before it flies out of sight. Col. Bennett H. Young, airing again in the *Central Presbyterian*, declares that the Committee which obtained an injunction against the anti-unionists in Tennessee was provided with funds out of the treasury of the Northern Church. Col. Young has not the slightest ground in the world for saying such a thing except his bloody imagination."

Upon this testimony of these three *swift* and biased witnesses Dr. Neel bases his declarations that I have not stated this matter truthfully.

Dr. Neel very carelessly has failed to read the complaint filed by Dr. Ira Landrith and his associates in the Tennessee Court. He therefore makes these statements not upon his own knowledge, but upon the information in a large part given out by Dr. Landrith and his associates, who in the name of the Presbyterian Church in the

United States of America instituted this action in Tennessee against loyalists of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

THE TENNESSEE SUIT.

A reading of the complaint filed by Dr. Landrith and his associates in the Chancery Court of Tennessee shows conclusively four things:

First, that the suit was brought by Dr. Ira Landrith, ex-Moderator of the Cumberland Presbyterian Assembly, for and on behalf of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, known as the Northern Presbyterian Church.

Second, that in bringing this suit it was necessary to allege, and it was alleged that the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Northern Presbyterian Church were then united and had been for a long time united.

Third, that Dr. Ira Landrith and his associates were appointed, as they swore in the petition filed in that case, a Committee to employ such legal counsel as in the judgment of the Committee it might be necessary to defend or prosecute any litigation which might arise in any part of the Church the ensuing year.

Fourth, that suit was brought under the power given this Committee by the General Assembly.

How can any honest and intelligent man, in the face of these facts, all of which are taken from the complaint of Dr. Landrith, suing for and on behalf of all the ministers, officers and members of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, under authority given by the General Assembly of 1906, to employ legal counsel to defend or prosecute any litigation which might arise, and that backed by the fact that in their bill, in order to have any standing in Court, they

had to allege that the Churches were united, say that the money with which to prosecute this suit did not come from the Treasury of the Northern Presbyterian Church? Under the allegations set forth in this bill and sworn to by Dr. Landrith, there could not be two treasuries. They declared that the Churches were already united, they were one, and it was necessary to make this declaration in order to take the property from the Cumberland Presbyterians in Tennessee, who repudiated the jurisdiction of the Northern Presbyterian Church, and who attempted to hold their property as against the Northern Presbyterian Church.

This is a pitiful jugglery of words, and Dr. Neel ought to have been too straightforward, too much of a Christian and a gentleman, in the face of the declaration in this suit, to have suggested that I had said anything that was not true. People who say what they do not know to be true, in the eyes of the law, are just as guilty as people who tell what they know not to be true, and if Dr. Neel wanted to criticise this statement, he owed it to himself and to the Church which he in a measure claims to represent to have investigated the facts before he committed himself to a declaration so devoid of truth.

DR. NEEL'S BOAST.

Dr. Neel boasts of the fact that he was for four years a private in the Confederate Army, and for thirty-five years a minister in the Southern Presbyterian Church, and then he tells us he loves the Southern Church better than any spot the sun shines on. If this be true, why does the Doctor seek to blot out the "best and most beauteous spot that the sun shines on"—why go around with uplifted hand and open knife to stab

his mother church, to destroy her life and her identity, and to create strife and discord and division among her people? He declares that he does it to prevent the Southern Church from being placed in a false attitude with her sisterhood of Presbyterian Churches. Is it not better to have the enemies of the Southern Presbyterian Church say that it is isolated, that it claims orthodoxy, and stands firmly by the truths for which our forefathers contended than to have merely the good opinion of the entire sisterhood of Presbyterian Churches?

We have not had this good opinion in the past. The Northern Presbyterian Church in particular has said a great many unkind things about the Southern Presbyterian Church. Dr. Neel's zeal to prevent the Southern Church from being what he calls "placed in a false attitude," surely ought not to lead him to make a constant effort to kill and destroy the church which he proudly says he has served for thirty-five years past. To destroy the one who gave us birth—who nurtured us and cared for us during the years of our infancy and helplessness is the worst of all offenses that can come into a human career. Why Dr. Neel should show such zeal and persistency in his effort to eliminate the Southern Presbyterian Church and to incorporate it in the Northern Church is one of the things that some of his brethren can not understand. With his big heart and his big head he ought to hesitate long, after what he claims to have done for the Southren Church, to be so zealous for its destruction and annihilation.

WHO FORCED THE CUMBERLAND DIVISION.

Dr. Neel seems to be especially stirred up

by a quotation from my pamphlet as follows: "Division has been forced by the Northern Presbyterian Church upon the Cumberland Presbyterian Church."

I think I can prove this by something higher than Dr. Neel's, or Dr. Landrith's or Dr. Black's word. I can prove it by the records of a Court of Justice. These are always considered the best evidence of facts. Even the Northern Presbyterian papers will not stand for what Dr. Neel is so quick to approve, viz: the Court proceedings by the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America against the Cumberland Presbyterians of Tennessee.

On the 21st day of July, 1906, a Complaint in Chancery was filed before the Hon. Walter S. Bearden, Chancellor of the Fifth Chancery Division of the State of Tennessee, holding Court at Fayetteville, Tenn. The first complainant named in this bill is Ira Landrith, formerly moderator of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. With a number of other gentlemen he brought this suit against the Moderator of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, which refused to unite with the Northern Presbyterian Church, at Decatur, Illinois. Dr. Landrith, of Davidson County, Tennessee, J. M. Hubbert and B. P. Fullerton, of the State of Missouri, and quite a number of other ex-Cumberland Presbyterians, were complainants in this proceeding. In their sworn declaration to the Court, which was verified by Ira Landrith and G. H. Hogan, two of the complainants, Dr. Landrith and his associates say—naming these complaints—"all of said pastors, elders and other complainants suing, not only in their individual capacity, but also in their official and

representative capacity, as set forth in this caption and in this bill, and all other ministers, officers and members of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, they being too numerous to be named herein." This suit was brought not only against J. L. Hudgins, P. F. Johnson and others, but there were named as defendants in that suit "all other ministers, officers and members of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church who renounce or refuse to recognize the united church known as the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, they being too numerous to name herein."

It is a well known fact that there were about forty-two thousand Cumberland Presbyterians in Tennessee of whom not more than seven thousand have accepted the terms of union and agreed to enter the Northern Presbyterian Church. I use "Northern Presbyterian Church" not in an offensive sense, but simply as a term well understood and easily expressive of the "Presbyterian Church in the United States of America."

It is well to remember that this proceeding was had in Court and Dr. Ira Landrith and G. H. Hogan swore to it on the 20th day of July, 1906, before John H. DeWitt, a notary public, who resided in Nashville. We have now a suit, not only on the part of Ira Landrith and his associates in their individual capacity, but also in their official and representative capacity, and also a suit by them in the name of, and for and on behalf of all "other ministers, officers and members of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America."

This bill sets up the fact that the church is a united church; that the Cumberland Presbyterian

Church and the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America are now one and the same. Upon no other basis was this action maintainable.

In the fifth paragraph of this complaint filed by Dr. Landrith for himself and for "all other ministers, officers and members of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America" is the following allegation: *"Complainants are therefore advised and believe that the decisions of the Assembly in question were, and are, correct, but whether correct or not, they are binding upon every church member and can not be reviewed by the civil courts, and complainants rely on such decisions as conclusive."*

This complaint further sets out that a Committee on Pastoral Oversight was appointed by the Assembly of 1906, which was "authorized from time to time, as occasion may require, to employ such legal counsel as in its judgment may be necessary properly to defend or prosecute any litigation which may arise in any part of the Church during the ensuing year, and to concert such other measures as it may deem necessary to promote the interests of the Church."

With these facts taken from the sworn statements of Dr. Ira Landrith and others, who undertake to represent the Northern Presbyterian Church, suing as declared, for "all other ministers, officers and members of the Presbyterian Church" can any man say that I have not declared truly when I wrote in my criticism of Dr. Neel's article that "division has been forced by the Northern Church upon the Cumberland Presbyterian Church?"

The Northern Presbyterian Church has delib-

erately gone into the Courts of Tennessee. It has sued the members of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, who are unwilling to acknowledge its jurisdiction. Not only that, but it slipped into a Chancery Court without notice of any kind whatever, and without any warning, secretly obtained an order which deprived thirty-five thousand people of their right to worship God in Cumberland houses of worship. The injunction granted by the Judge, who upon the *ex parte* statement made in the name and on behalf of the Presbyterian Church, enjoined "all ministers, officers and members of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church who repudiated and renounced the action of the General Assembly and Presbyteries of said churches in agreeing to and forming a union with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America from interfering with or molesting the pastors, elders, deacons, church members or other ecclesiastical agencies who adhere to and recognize said Church in the use, enjoyment, possession and exclusive control of all houses of worship, parsonages, endowment funds, or other property or effects which belonged to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church or any of its boards, committees, judicatories, congregations or institutions or are held in trust for them."

Not only that—it has driven out of their houses of worship, by these sweeping injunctions thus secretly obtained, the people who are unwilling to recognize the jurisdiction of the Northern Presbyterian Church and further enjoined them from "instituting or prosecuting any suit at law or in equity for the purpose of asserting any right which they, or any of them, may

claim to have, possess, control or use any of said property."

The Northern Presbyterian Church is and was a party plaintiff in these proceedings. In plain English, it brought the suit or had or allowed it to be brought in its name. It thus forced the issue both as to doctrine and property. It went fiercely after these objecting Cumberland Presbyterians, and no opportunity to settle, divide or arbitrate was allowed. The cold, hard and pitiless hand of the law was laid upon these thirty-five thousand Cumberlands. They were not given a chance to present their side, but secretly, forcibly and relentlessly the injunctive process was obtained which shut these Cumberland Presbyterians out of their houses of worship, denied them the use of their name, hallowed by history and tradition, deprived them of the right to either print or circulate their Confession of Faith and actually restrained them from going to law except in that particular court to assert their claims to property, paid for by them and their father's money, and yet with all this and with this binding preliminary decree of the Court entered at the instance of the Northern Presbyterian Church, Dr. Neel is bold enough to say that church has not forced this division.

DR. NEEL'S ZEAL FOR HIS NORTHERN FRIENDS.

Dr. Neel, in his zeal for the defense of his newly found Northern Church allies, exultantly and complacently makes this statement about me:

"A less rash man would not have made so grave a charge without great care in ascertaining the facts. The Northern Church seems to have nothing whatever to do with the troubles in Tennessee."

Dr. Neel in making this allegation has been *played* by Drs. Landrith and Black and the Editor of the *Interior*, upon whose words he appears willing to stake his own reputation for truthfulness. To have been thus worked by these partisans in the outside world would indicate Dr. Neel as a chump—defined in Dictionaries as “a dull, blundering person.”

On the 21st of July, 1906, ninety days before Dr. Neel penned this unfortunate and erroneous statement, Dr. Landrith and his associates had filed a sworn complaint in the Fifth Chancery Division of the State of Tennessee before Judge Bearden, wherein they sought to take from the loyal Cumberland Presbyterians their houses of worship, their name, their Confession of Faith and their right to sue for their property, and they then and there *swore* that “*they sued not only in their individual capacity but also in their official and representative capacity as set forth in this caption and in this bill, and all other ministers, officers and members of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., they being too numerous to be named herein.*”

Dr. Landrith swore he represented all other ministers, officers and members of the Northern Presbyterian Church, they being too numerous to be named. He undertook in a Court of Justice to stand for all “the ministers, officers and members of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.,” and sued his former associates for and on behalf of all those who constituted the Northern Presbyterian Church.

Ignorant of the real facts and without knowledge that the Northern Presbyterian Church was a plaintiff in this suit, Dr. Neel charges me with in-

accuracy and rashness. This record shows that instead of the Northern Church, as he says, having "nothing whatever to do with the troubles in Tennessee," it was really a plaintiff in the suit which has dishonored the Presbyterian name and cause, promoted unparalleled bitterness and discord, and in the honored name of Presbyterianism, sought to take from these betrayed Cumberlandlands their churches, their name, their Confession of Faith, and their inalienable privilege to defend in the courts their property rights. And all this was done without warning or notice and in the name of Christ; so that when the sun dawned on the Court House, this secret injunction, like a thief in the night, had gone forth on its mission of oppression and injustice, and the unsuspecting Cumberland Christians found themselves spiritually homeless but for friendly barns, and houseless but for the generous shades of the forest.

This sort of statement by Dr. Neel thus contradicted by the sworn declarations of the men upon whose information he based it, may not in these days, when everything is swallowed up in the wail for unity, be called by hard names, but in olden times it would be very close to a violation of the Ninth Commandment, and in polite modern phraseology might be styled "a departure from moral integrity." I respect Dr. Neel's calling and high character too much to give it harsher designation, but urge him hereafter never to speak confidently of a record and call in question a christian brother's veracity concerning it until he, himself, has examined such record and made himself acquainted with its contents.

The whole proceeding now pending in the name of the Northern Presbyterian Church and on its behalf in the Tennessee Court against these Cumberland Presbyterians who refuse to be coerced into accepting a creed they can not conscientiously believe or receive, is unworthy the history or genius of Presbyterianism. It is legally, morally and ecclesiastically at war with the spirit and practice of enlightened Christianity and ought to be, and doubtless will be quickly repudiated by the Northern Presbyterian Church. The few scattered congregations it may induce to enter its communion will be a dear price to pay for such a monstrous wrong against these resisting Cumberland Presbyterians.

In the South we sometimes hear of people who go out into the fields and find a covey of birds huddled together all unconscious of danger. The cruel hunter, without giving the flock a chance for their lives, fires into them before they have time to rise to their wings or make effort to escape. Such sportsmen are known as "Pot-Hunters."

These same methods are now for the first time introduced into ecclesiastical contests. The covert way in which the Northern Presbyterian Church and its co-plaintiffs and new converts slipped into the Chancery Court in Tennessee, and without warning or notice, secured the hateful injunctions heretofore described, have inaugurated a new system for securing converts and property which may be appropriately designated as "Ecclesiastical Pot-Hunting."

It may be that "coming events cast their shadows before." If Dr. Neel can defend and applaud this action of Dr. Landrith and associates and

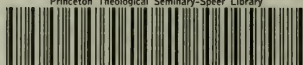
proclaim his peculiar admiration for the Northern Presbyterian Church, may not the day, the dark day, come when these same proceedings will be used to coerce Southern Presbyterians who resist organic union, and to take from them their name and their property? Elisha shocked Hazael when he revealed the character and extent of his future dealings with God's people; but Hazael while protesting in bitter speech, and with earnest denial, yet did all that the prophet foretold.

Louisville, Ky., Nov. 12, 1906.





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